Agencies Urged to Use San Clemente

By Jack Anderson

President Nixon has made a strong pitch to federal agencies to hold their conferences at the seaside Western White House in an apparent effort to throw an official cloak around his San Clemente extravagances.

The flight of hundreds of bureaucrats to San Clemente, of course, will add to the fuel drain and the taxpayers' bills. But it will be easier for the President to justify the millions he has poured into the San Clemente complex if he can show that government agencies are utilizing the facilities.

The President not only has sent out special invitations to several agencies to make use of the Western White House, but he has included a brochure of all the available attractions.

This alluring booklet, with the title "The Western White House" printed on a fern green cover, touts the conference facilities at the Coast Guard station next to the presidential compound.

But the emphasis is on the recreation that the officials can enjoy when they're not tied up on official business. The booklet boasts that fishing, swimming, golf, bowling, bull fights, jai alai and many more leisure activities await them at San Clemente.

Visits to Disneyland, a fruit orchard and the world's biggest telescope are also offered. "Casual dress is the rule in San Clemente," adds the White House booklet. "Short sleeve shirts, slacks or shorts for men—light cottons for women" are prescribed for what the booklet promises is "the world's all-year-around finest" weather.

The presidential invitations were issued earlier this year at a time when Mr. Nixon was on the skillet for using the taxpayers' money to purchase luxury items for the San Clemente compound. The word that the Western White House was available for conferences was passed to the agencies by his military aide, Brig. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, who recently was given another star and promoted to White House national security deputy.

"The President has asked me," wrote the general, "to renew his offer of the facilities of the Western White House for the use of government and certain other groups.

"The area offers generally pleasant weather in a secluded, informal setting . . . The 10 fully-equipped offices, conference room, private beach and bath house, helipad and excellent communications system provide ideal conference accommodations for up to 40 persons," he said.

Several government agencies have jumped at the opportunity to hold their meetings in balmy San Clemente. Among them are the Justice Department, Federal Aviation Administration, General Services Administration, and Labor Department.

So far this year, 38 government and civic organizations have accepted the President's appealing invitation. And 79 did so in 1972.

The FAA's top brass was planning a conference at San Clemente for early December, even as the President was ordering fuel savings. Almost half of the 29 participants will wing across country from Washington.

A spokesman explained that the "focus will be on general aviation, a vital conference, and the costs about equalize out. Often we can get more work done outside Washington."

At the White House, Scowcroft said his predecessor had sent out a similar invitation before all the hoopla over the President's San Clemente spending. The purpose of his own memo, Scowcroft said, was purely "to tell them there were these facilities available." He denied "100 per cent" that it was to justify the President's spending.

Hospital Costs—In March of 1972, the board chairman of Hospital Supply Corp. delivered $250,000 to President Nixon's campaign.

The bighearted chairman, Jack Massey, assured us he asked nothing in return. But all of a sudden, the government started taking actions which brought higher profits for Hospital Supply and higher medical costs for the sick.

Not long after Massey handed over the money, for example, the Health, Education, and Welfare Department ruled that hospitals receiving federal Hill-Burton money could spend some of it on private hospital management. Hospital Supply happens to dominate this facet of the health industry.

Still later, John Hill, a Hospital Supply vice president, was named to the Health Advisory Committee, which advises the Cost of Living Council. The council recently announced it would allow hospital bills to rise an average of 9 per cent a year.

Curious Coincidence: Sources close to Dr. Tom Frist, Jr., another Hospital Supply vice president, told us he had been bragging earlier that the $250,000 contribution would be rewarded, among other things, with an influential seat on the Cost of Living Council.

Frist didn't specifically deny he had made the statement, but he told my associate Jack Cloherty that Hill was qualified for the post and that the appointment wasn't necessarily linked to any contribution. Hill was in Lisbon, Portugal, and couldn't be reached for comment.

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